

PROPOSITION 18:

CALIFORNIA VOTING FOR 17-YEAR-OLDS AMENDMENT. Legislatively Referred Constitutional Amendment

Ballot Summary:

This measure would amend Article II of the California Constitution to allow a 17-year-old who will be 18 by the time of the next general election to vote in any primary or special election that occurs before the next general election.

Background:

The California Constitution requires a citizen to be the age of 18 or older before they can vote in a state, local or federal election. Other states permit a 17-year-old to vote in a primary election if the voter will turn 18 by the time of the general election. In some other states, 17-year-olds are allowed to participate in presidential caucuses if they will be 18 by the date of the general election, though the eligibility requirements for participating in a presidential caucus generally is determined by the political party conducting the caucus. At least two localities (Takoma Park and Hyattsville, Maryland) have allowed 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in municipal elections.

In California, a number of local jurisdictions have sought to lower the voting age for certain elections. In 2016, voters in the City of Berkeley approved a charter amendment that permits the City Council to lower the voting age to 16 years old for school board elections. In 2020, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors introduced a charter amendment that would permit 16- and 17-year-old residents to vote in San Francisco's municipal elections. In 2016, a similar ballot measure, known as Proposition F, was proposed and subsequently rejected by San Francisco voters. Additionally, in 2020, the Oakland City Council voted to submit a ballot measure to the voters for the November 3, 2020 general election that would amend the city's charter to authorize the City Council to allow eligible individuals who are at least 16 years old to vote for the office of School Director.

Fiscal impact:

This measure would result in one-time General Fund costs to the Secretary of State (SOS) in the range of \$480,000 to \$640,000, likely in 2020-21, for printing and mailing costs to place the measure on the ballot in a statewide election. Actual costs may be higher or lower, depending on the length of required elements and the overall size of the ballot.

Additionally, the measure would result in one-time increased General Fund costs of roughly \$250,000 for SOS to provide new or replenish existing registration cards and for changes to the VoteCal system, including validation and modifications on the California Online Voter Registration website (COVR).

Support and Opposition:

Supporters include Generation Citizen and various student groups that argue this measure is a way to increase California's low voter turnout numbers. They state that extending voting rights to 17-year-olds can spur a long-term increase in turnout, because voting is habitual, and research shows that age 17 is a better age than 18 to establish the habit. California has already taken important steps to encourage youth engagement, including allowing 16-year-olds to preregister to vote and establishing High School Voter Education Weeks.

Opponents include the Election Integrity Project California that argues that 17-year-olds are legal minors and considered children in the eyes of the law. They contend that since they are almost all still living at home they

are subject to undue pressure and influence from their immediate superiors such as parents or teachers. This means they are less likely to be expressing their own, independently thought-out choices in elections and would just vote as extensions of their elders.

Prior Positions:

The Federation took a support position on Proposition 52 (2002) that would have allowed same day voter registration.

A YES vote on this measure means:

Voters support this constitutional amendment to allow 17-year-olds who will be 18 by the time of the next general election to vote at any primary or special election that occurs before the next general election.

A NO vote on this measure means:

Voters would not change the current voting age of 18 years old.